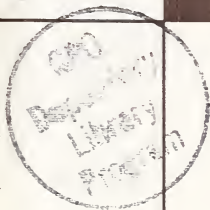


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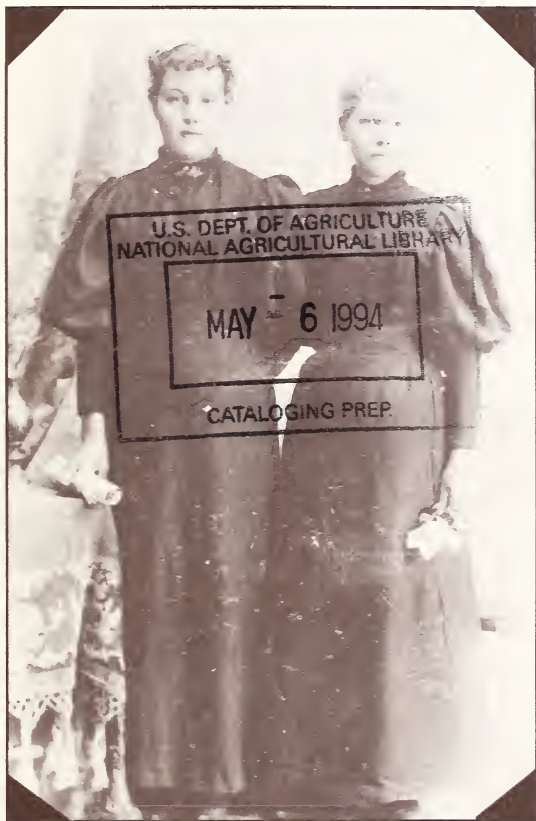
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The Swedish Settlement



MAR 10 1994



Chequamegon National Forest

Traces of America's Past



United States Department of Agriculture

The Swedish Settlement



The Gust Welin Homestead

Beginning in 1902, Gust and Ida Welin homesteaded 160 acres in the Marengo Valley. Gust Welin was born in Eriksburg, Vingabu, Sodermanland, Sweden in 1872. In addition to farming, Gust worked in logging camps and did road work. He was elected to several positions including Town of Grandview Supervisor, Justice, and Constable from 1913 to 1924. In 1933, he was appointed to Foreman of Unemployment Relief Work, at a salary of \$2.75 for an eight-hour day.

As a thirteen year old girl, Ida Nelson Welin came to the United States in 1892 or 1893 with her widowed mother, sister Esther and brother Axel. She married Gust Welin in 1898. Ida, who was very tall, was nicknamed "Mountain Goat" because she could run up and down the valley. She was also noted for her homemaking skills and as a good neighbor.

Gust and Ida kept 13 dairy cows, raised potatoes, rutabagas and hay. Every week they would take the cream which Ida had churned from the milk, to Grandview--a 10 mile walk over rough country roads.

Gust Welin's original crude shelters were gradually replaced over time. The livestock barn was built in 1917. The date is inscribed in the northeast corner of the concrete foundation. The east half was sectioned into 13 stalls for dairy cows. The impression of the uprights used for the stall dividers are

t in the Marengo River

evident in several places along the concrete wall. A pipeline drained water from the springhouse to the barn. Gutters at the head of the stalls gave the cows access to the water.

The first priority of any homesteader was sewing spring crops. Venison, grouse, berries, fish and other foodstuffs were stored for the long winter. Gust and Ida Welin probably lived in a temporary log cabin with a dirt floor for a few years until the fields were cleared and the crops could be relied upon.

After a time, a proper house was built with stone foundations. The deeper part in the west side of this foundation was possibly a storage area under the kitchen floor. The concrete foundation on the east side may have been a later addition. The springhouse is the only structure that is still intact on the Welin Homestead. Built of concrete, the springhouse protects the source of the spring which still seeps today. This provided a cool storage area in the hot summers for their milk. Water pipes at one time ran from the springhouse to the house and barn.

A root cellar can be found on the west side of the farmstead. The cellar was constructed by scooping out the side of the hill and piling the earth to form the walls. A wooden roof and door secured the storage area. Earthen walls kept a constant temperature to sustain preserved foods such as apples and potatoes.



Gust and Ida Welin reading with a neighbor.

Valley



The Gust Welin Homestead

The Green Mountain School

In 1909, Gust Welin donated an acre of his farm for a one-room schoolhouse, named after the low hill where it is located. Children up to three miles away attended. Families were mostly Swedish--the Linds, Hogstroms, Bergmans--and education was seen as a path to success in the New World. Classes were small, 10 to 20 children, ages six to 16. School teachers were unmarried young women and boarded with the Welin family.



The Green Mountain School house in the Marengo River Valley.

The school's bell was brought by railroad to Grandview, then by horse and buggy to the Green Mountain School with the bell clanging all the way. The bell is now in the Birch Lake Trinity Luthern Church. Green Mountain School closed in 1923. All that remains today is the stone foundation and the clearing where the children played.



Children from the Lind, Bergman, Welin, Swenson, and Levine families at the Green Mountain School.

The Calvin Beyzanson Homestead

A Swedish bachelor farmer who worked in the logging camps lived here. Little is known about Calvin Beyzanson except his nickname, Black Cal. Only the stone foundations of where he used to live and work remain.

There is a story reported about Black Cal. When he was dancing with another local settler, Mrs. Sophie Levine, Levine lost the pipe she was smoking down Beyzanson's shirt, causing a great deal of consternation on his part!

The rock pile in the clearing represents substantial time and human labor spent over the years of trying to improve the soil to yield more edible crops. Black Cal died in his cabin around 1928 and the farm was abandoned.

Swedish Immigrants i

Welcome to the Swedish Settlement. This brochure is a self-guided tour of the remains of three historic sites in the Marengo River Valley. You can start at either end of the trail without detracting from the experience. The points of interest are signed along the way and correspond to descriptions in this brochure. The entire tour is four and a half miles, with some steep climbs. Visitors should allow three hours for the entire tour.

Swedish immigrants began settling this valley in the 1880's. Many had left their homeland in Sweden in search of a better life in America. The rolling hills of the Marengo River Valley were a welcome sight to these immigrants as it reminded them of the homeland they had left behind.

Towns were far apart and many immigrants arrived ahead of the railroad. Travelling north on foot, they followed the cleared railroad grade. By 1882, the railroad reached Grandview, Wisconsin, opening up the Marengo



A social gathering at Gust and Ida Welin

the Marengo Valley

River Valley frontier to more settlers.

Basic subsistence was the priority for the first few years. Homes were barely more than walls and a roof. Effort was put into clearing fields, planting crops and hunting game and fish. Potatoes were usually the first crop, followed by field corn (the multi-colored variety) along with small plots of vegetables.

Native plant foods like maple syrup, wild honey, and berries were also gathered. Grass hay was harvested for winter fodder and most settlers acquired livestock and an oxen or horse for hauling and plowing.

The marginal glacial soils of the Marengo River Valley prevented any great prosperity through agriculture. Opportunities in road building, construction and lumbering often provided a better chance at success and higher wages. Husbands who took these jobs left the full burden of running the farm and caring for the children to their wives for four to six months at a time.



homestead in the Marengo River Valley.

The Swedish Settlement

Farm Life in the Early Years

Many of the early settlers acquired their property from the federal government under the Homestead Act of 1862. To qualify for this, the settler had to guarantee to settle the land for five years, build a house and barn and make an attempt to farm.

Clearing the land proved to be an arduous task. Settlers sometimes resorted to dynamite to loosen large stumps. Many hours were spent grubbing and hoeing the unforgiving rocky, glacial terrain with nothing more than an axe, grub hoe and shovel.

Farming started on a small scale at first, with a few cows and a small garden. As more land was cleared, they expanded their livestock, including chickens and sheep for wool. Eventually they expanded their crops and a horse or oxen was used to pull the plow and harrows used for tilling the soil.

During the winter, the men usually went to live and work in the logging camps leaving the farm duties and responsibilities to the women. A typical day for the women included rising around four in the morning, preparing breakfast and the rest of the day's meals, doing household and farm chores, storing food and sewing, knitting and washing clothes for the family.



Fritz Peterson, Axel Welin, George Waynert, Gunnar Lanning, Victor Johnson, and "Papa" Erickson at an afternoon social.

at in the Marengo River



The cooks at Camp 12 in 1910, several miles south of the Gust Welin homestead.

Logging for the men was dawn to dusk work, six days a week, with Sunday as a day of rest. The men were paid eleven dollars a month. When logging operations ceased in the spring, the men returned to their homesteads to continue farming and clearing more land.

The children learned the task of farming at an early age and were relied upon to help bring in the crops and care for the animals.



The Robert Lind family were neighbors and friends of Gust and Ida Welin. Robert Lind played the accordion for many of the dances and home gatherings.

r Valley



A hard day of work in the woods for the lumberjacks and horses was a way of life for the early settlers.

Entertainment included Saturday night parties and Sunday afternoon picnics. Music and dances were a big part of these outings. One of the places for these gatherings was Marengo Island. People came from great distances to attend these celebrations.

A dance hall was constructed on the island in 1909 or 1910. A bridge connecting the island to the mainland provided access. When there were too many people crossing the bridge, it would sag below the water and people would get their feet wet.



Music was played by local musicians, with lunches served and moonshine available. Robert Lind played for many of the dances and parties. Many local residents still recall the day when Robert Lind played his accordion while crossing the bridge with Ed Ellingsen, and they both fell in. Robert spent many days drying and gluing his accordion.

Although there were many hardships and few conveniences in these times, the families and neighbors were very close and socializing was a mainstay. Lending a helping hand during harvest time or storing food for winter was a way of life with these settlers, and helped to strengthen the bonds between them.



A Fourth of July Picnic at Marengo Island.



Location Map of the Swedish Homesteads in the Marengo Valley



DISCOVER AMERICA...
a little bit at a time

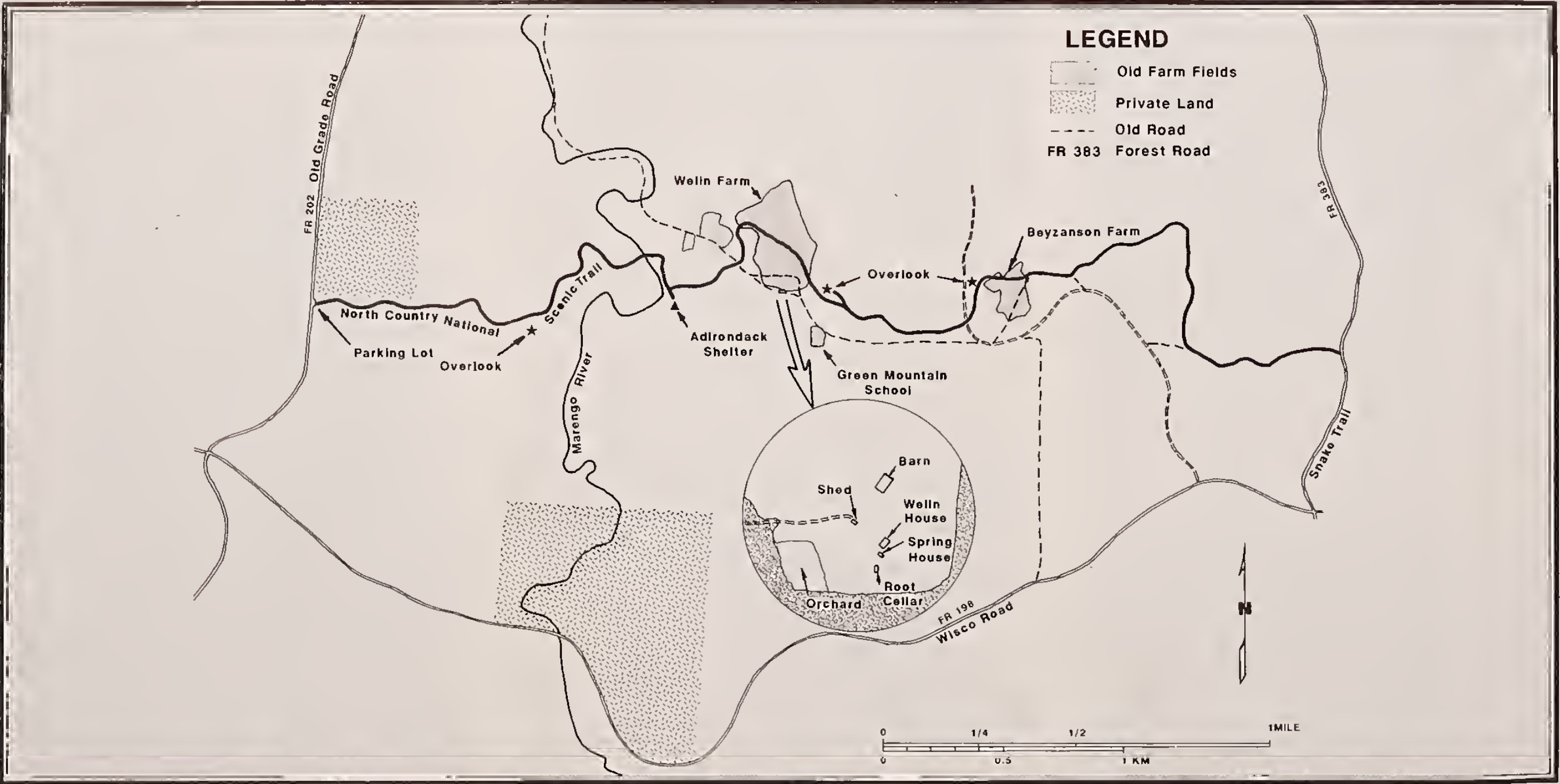
This brochure was prepared by the Chequamegon National Forest. It's designed for a day trip or part of a weekend visit to help history enthusiasts discover a part of America just around the corner.

Please Don't Erase Traces of America's Past

There are approximately 550 documented historic sites on the Chequamegon National Forest, with over 99 of these on the Hayward Ranger District. Few of these sites have been identified as to their type, function, or affiliation. Similarly, there are numerous undocumented homestead sites on private lands in the area of Grandview and the Town of Lincoln.

To protect and preserve your cultural heritage, you are urged to leave any artifacts and remains undisturbed. It is unlawful to remove historic or prehistoric objects from federal lands. Please report information on any disturbance of cultural resources to the nearest Forest Service office. Enjoy but do not destroy our heritage.

A "Windows On The Past" Project





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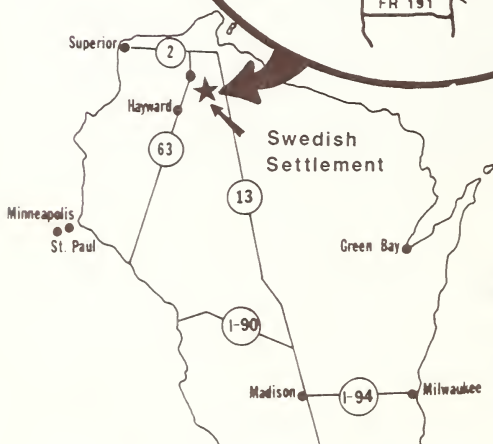
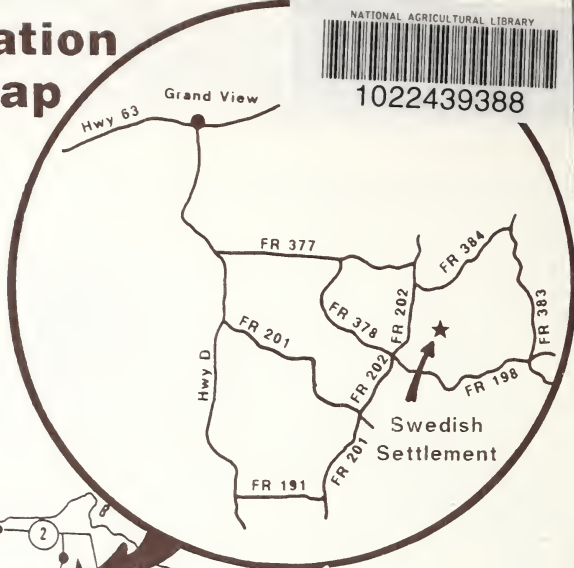
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Swedish Immigrants

Location Map



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Wisconsin Vicinity Map

For more information about this historic settlement or other outdoor recreational opportunities in your National Forest, write or call:

Forest Supervisor
USDA-Forest Service
1170 S. 4th Ave.
Park Falls, WI 54552
(715) 762-2461

Hayward District Ranger
USDA-Forest Service
Rt. 10, Box 508
Hayward, WI 54843
(715) 634-4821



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